

STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT  
State/Territory: California

ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Programs to Measure and Reduce Inconsistency

The State has in effect the following programs to measure and reduce inconsistency in the application of survey results among surveyors.

The Licensing and Certification program uses several means in addition to supervisory and management direction to assure consistency of survey processes and results:

A. Training. All newly hired survey staff participate in a twelve week Academy developed and conducted by the Licensing and Certification. Trainees learn the doctrine, regulations and consistent procedures used in the survey process. The Academy course alternates between classroom work and field application under the guidance of experienced surveyor and supervisory staff. From the Academy, all new surveyors participate in HCFA's Basic Surveyor Training which is a quality assurance program on a national level.

B. Preceptors. Survey staff have access to expert mentors who actively review survey methods and results for consistency. Preceptor staff meet regularly to discuss findings of surveyor performance throughout the State and to propose additional training or systems changes necessary to gain greater consistency.

C. The On-site Surveyor Performance Assessment and Training Survey (OSPATS). OSPATS is the federal, real-time evaluation of surveyor performance of the survey. The Licensing and Certification program uses the results of these evaluations to assess areas for improving surveyor consistency.

D. District Manager/District Administrator Meetings. The top managers in the District Offices meet each month to review work production reports from the program's management information systems and assess any discrepancy in workload performance. This monthly forum also provides for information sharing regarding consistent application of policies and procedures.

E. Consistency Advisory Committee. The Deputy Director has chartered this committee with the responsibility to review any aspect of the regulatory program and make recommendations in areas which would benefit from greater consistency. The Committee is chaired by a District Administrator and utilizes the services of an Ad Hoc Advisory Group which includes representatives from industry, advocate groups, the State Ombudsman and the Department of Aging. The Committee has proposed several areas for study and has released its first recommendation for a consistent protocol addressing Immediate and Serious Threat determinations.

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F. Survey Review Tool. Program supervisors in District Offices use the quality assurance tool available in ASPEN. The tool provides a systematic review of a written deficiency matched against the standards in the Principles of Documentation. The tool has proven effective in realizing greater consistency in the documented record of survey findings.

G. District Office Production Reviews. As part of its organizational structure, the program includes an internal management analysis and evaluation unit. The work of this unit includes review of survey results, work procedures and systems to assess the extent of consistent application of statutes, regulations, policies and administrative procedures. Management reports highlight variations which may be foundation of further analysis or the development of changes.

H. Policy and Procedure Manual. The Program updates and maintains a Policy and Procedure Manual to establish a consistent basis for administering operational aspects of its regulatory responsibilities. The Manual is available in multiple copies in each District Office. Updates are used as the basis for training of staff in the Districts.

The State takes the following actions in organizing and using its survey teams:

A. Survey teams are multidisciplinary and include at least one Registered Nurse. The most prevalent employee classification used by the State in its survey work is Health Facilities Evaluator Nurse. This classification carries a requirement for maintenance of licensure as a Registered Nurse. All teams have access to consultant support in the areas of Medical/Physician services, dietary and nutrition, medical records, physical therapy, occupational therapy and pharmacy.

B. The State uses a code of conduct for its survey team members which precludes surveying of a facility at which the team member may have been previously employed, or may have served as a consultant, or may have family ties. Survey team members affirm that they have read, understand and will comply with this requirement.

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C. Survey staff who have not completed the Program's own New Surveyor Academy, the HCFA Regional Office orientation and HCFA's Basic Surveyor Training may accompany facility survey teams and conduct tasks or parts of tasks, under supervision, as part of their development process. Completion of all required training is necessary prior to full, independent participation as a survey team member. Passage of the SMQT is a requirement to support a survey team member's authorization to sign survey documents on behalf of the Program.

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